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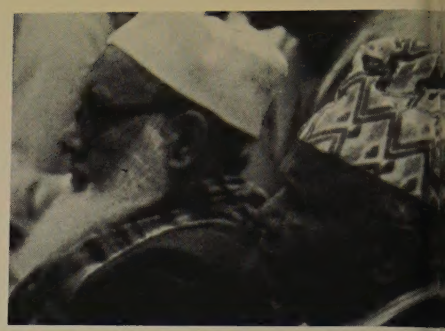

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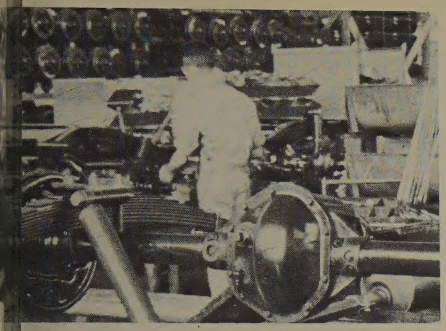

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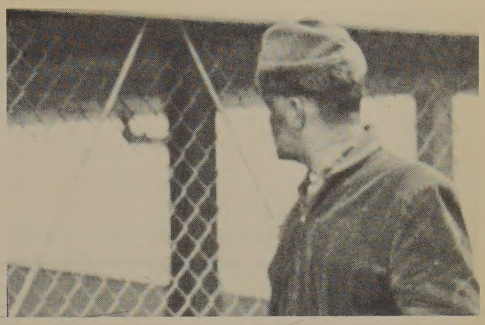

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"Here I am"

by Chiara Lubich

This year at the various gatherings and courses of formation of the Focolare Movement, one fundamental point of its spirituality was considered in-depth: the moment during Christ's passion when he cried out, "My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" "Jesus Forsaken," is seen then as the key to unity of our soul with God. The following are some excerpts on this fascinating topic from a recent book by Chiara Lubich, entitled "Journey," which has been published by New City Press.

Those of us in the first Focolare household gave everything we possessed, keeping only the mattresses on which to sleep. We left but a single object hanging on the wall: a picture of Jesus Forsaken. We did this to show him our preferential love—or better, our exclusive love. Before him each morning we would pray with these words: "Because you are forsaken..."

But what did those four words mean? Was it simply: "Because you were forsaken, I now have life; and therefore I want to have you as the only reason for my life. And since I have made this choice, I want to love you in suffering; and in my neighbors, whose sufferings remind me of you, and in those persons and situations that we sense have something to do with the goals of this new Movement which we then had a glimpse of?"

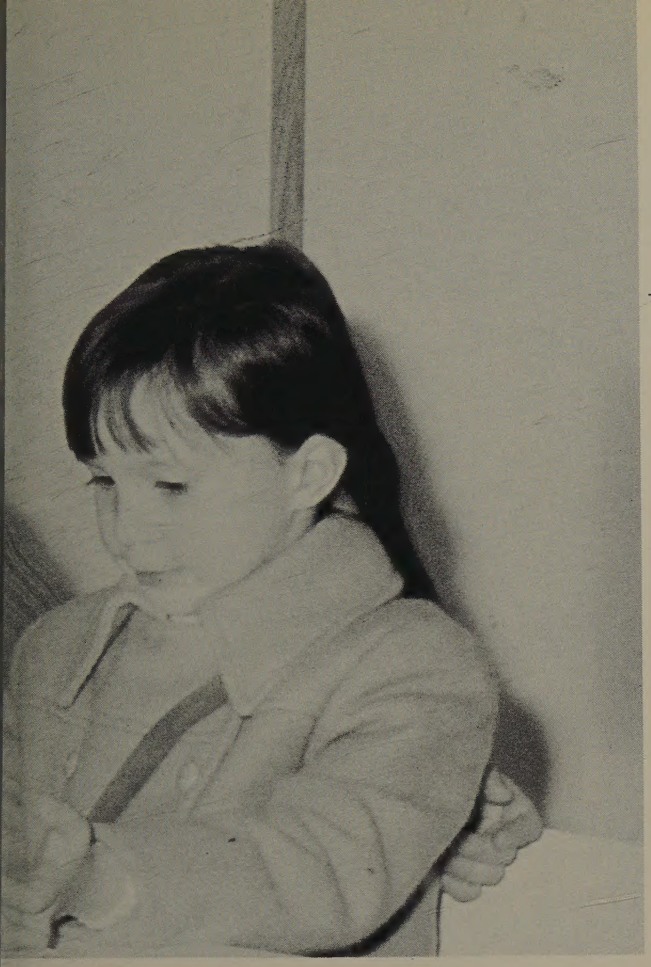
No. This was not the first meaning of that prayer. With those words we wanted to tell Jesus, "Because you were forsaken, and by this saved us; because I, too, have died and risen with you—here I am, completely renewed, just as you want me to be, ready for this day! In every moment of this day, I will be the answer to your 'Why?' I will be a fruit of your abandonment. And not just any sort of fruit, but a worthy fruit: beautiful, full, tasty, at its peak. And, therefore, it is not enough for me to have received through baptism the faith and life which you merited for me by your cross and abandonment. I want to correspond fully to these gifts. So here I am, Jesus!" In other words, we wanted to declare: "Because you were forsaken, here I am!"

The New Commandment—this is our calling: a vocation to love, to love in every moment; to enkindle a blaze of love in the world; to be constantly ready each day to pay our "debt" as St. Paul puts it, our debt of love (cf. Rom. 13:8). The Spirit, who is present in each one of us and has made us free, pours love into our hearts and leads us to love others—to put ourselves at their service, to consider every person we meet our master.

But who can teach us this way of loving, which involves such complete self-denial? Who can teach us this kind of love, which leads us, in each present moment, to fulfill our obligation as Christians and at the same time leads us toward perfection—toward sanctity—more effectively than anything else?

We know the answer: Jesus Forsaken on the cross. He is our "style" of loving. This is how he loved humanity;this is how we should love our fellow human beings.

So here's a good suggestion: whenever we encounter another person—at work, at school, at home, while shopping, or anywhere else; whenever we speak with someone on the phone, or whenever we mention someone in conversation,



let's be especially ready to say "Here I am!" to Jesus Forsaken, ready to give up everything, to "make ourselves one" with that person. "Here I am Jesus Forsaken, ready to love you in every encounter with another person."

Something which never ceases to amaze me, and which moves me when I see it in our lives, is the faithfulness of Jesus Forsaken. He has made himself so one with everyone, to such a sublime and heroic degree, by being the first to practice this art of loving, that every person on earth can feel he is close to them in every difficulty, and especially in moments of suffering.

Do we feel forsaken or alone? He is there. Betrayed or humiliated? He is there, too. Do we feel lukewarm, disorientated, excluded? Failures or sinners? He is there. He is always faithful. He never fails to be there. In fact, just when everybody else disappears, that is the moment when he appears.

Well then, let this be our resolution for the future: to compete with his faithfulness, to be wherever he is, unwavering, ready to love him, to embrace him.

Is he there in some personal sufferings we have? Then let's be there with him. Is he in our family, which is suffering, in our community, which is lacking the sunshine of love, of unity? Let's be there. Is he in the divisions among Christians? Let's be there in the front lines! Is he in those who do not know the true faith? Let's be there too. Is he in our cold, atheistic, or secularistic environment? Let's be there too, to embrace him in that coldness. Yes, let's compete with him, with his faithfulness.

We can experience the presence of the Risen Lord and the consequent outpouring of the gifts of his Spirit—life, light, peace, love, consolation, ardor, etc.—not only when there are two or more persons united in Jesus' name, but even when we are alone.

How? What's the price? Embracing Jesus Forsaken in each present moment.

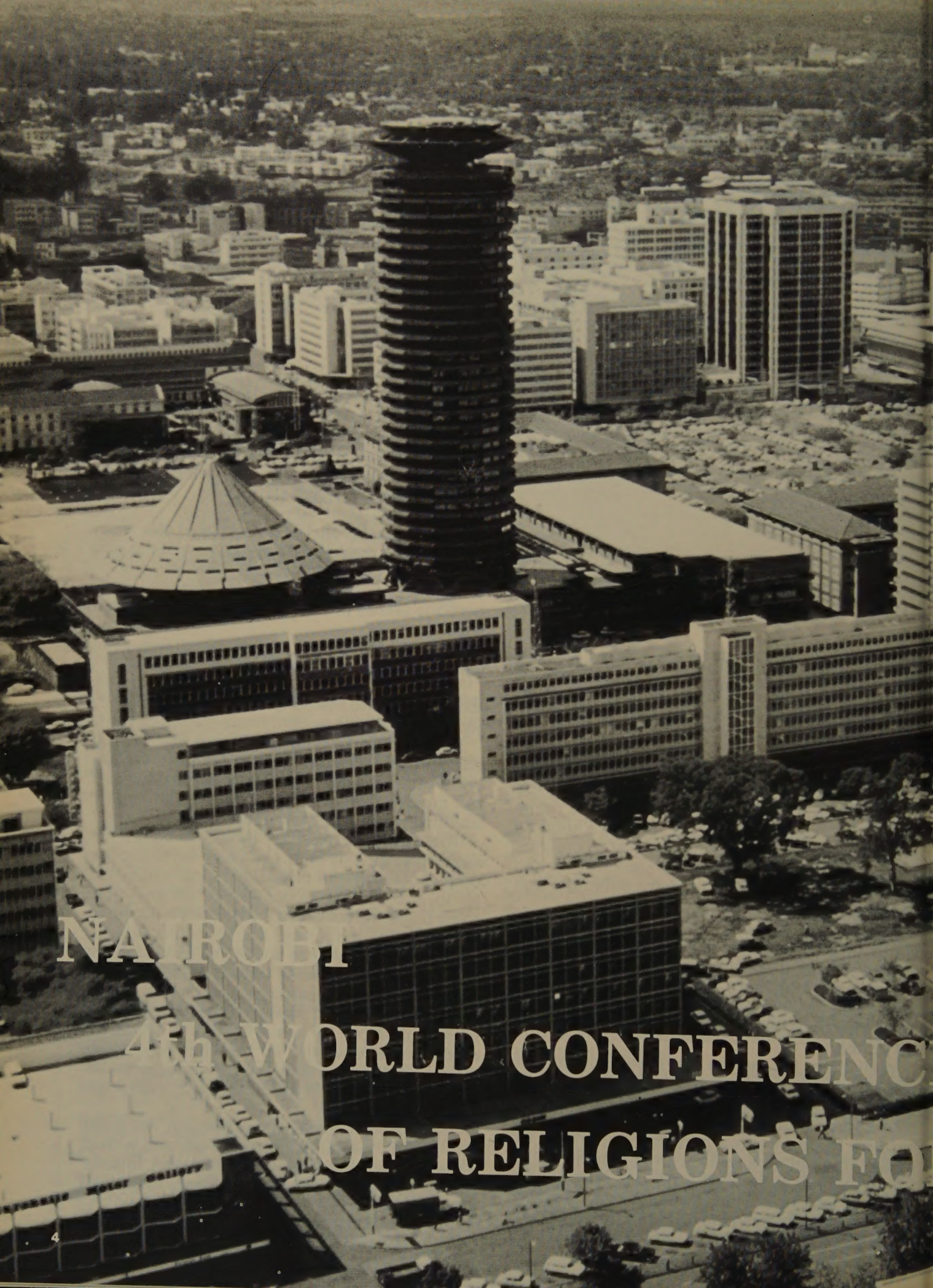
This extraordinary experience prompted us to look deeper into the Scriptures and the Church's teachings. And they confirmed that it was true.

So we need to embrace Jesus Forsaken in each present moment. But where are we to find him? In the denial of self and the taking up of our cross, which the Christian life demands of us, if we want to follow Jesus.

Therefore, we need to say yes to Jesus Forsaken and quickly embrace every suffering that comes our way—in other words, our cross. But for love to triumph in our hearts, we also need to embrace the suffering that comes from our efforts to deny ourselves, and from the struggle against our selfishness and the so-called desires of the flesh (tendencies toward overeating, impurity, quarreling, jealousy, and so on).

If, in the present moment, these efforts are loved out of love for Jesus Crucified; and if, immediately afterwards, we do what God wants from us in that moment, we can experience the fullness of the life of the Risen Lord, even when we are alone.

Then his light comes into our hearts. His peace fills us. His love is enkindled in us, and with it, consolation, serenity, a taste of heaven. In other words, everything changes. The soul is clothed anew. □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4th WORLD CONFERENC
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EACE

by Julian Ricchiazzi

Six hundred delegates from sixty countries commit themselves to work for disarmament, human rights, reconciliation.

Nairobi, August 23, 1984: The fourth World Conference of Religions for Peace (WCRP) opened at the Kenyatta Conference Center in Nairobi. Next to me stood an East Indian dressed in an orange robe—a monk who practices "Jainism." I struggled to bring to mind a satisfactory definition of this but in the meantime he offered to explain that for them everything is divine, even the animals. They would not kill any living creature, no matter how small. My friend did not come alone: there was an entire delegation of "jain" Indians. It was easy to understand why they had come: to a group of people who have no desire to destroy even the smallest living creature, war must appear as the greatest absurdity ever.

The opening reports all referred to the basic theme of the congress: Religions for Human Dignity and World Peace. Among the speakers were the Anglican Bishop of South Africa, Bishop Tutu, the Nigerian Catholic Archbishop Arinze pro-President of the Secretariat for non-Christians; Doctor Njoya, a Moslem from the Republic of Cameroons and the former Minister of Education, Father Christian Precht, a Catholic priest from Chile and three women who had collaborated on a report: Mrs. Jean Zaru, a Christian from Palestine, Miss Elkayan, Jewish, from Israel and Mrs. Haidar, a Moslem from Lebanon.

Six hundred delegates from sixty different countries—what could they do to convince the super powers to disarm? What solutions could they propose to stop the wars already taking place, to eliminate social injustice, racism?

"All this is so out of proportion to any possibility of intervention as individuals, groups or even nations, that it would seem useless to hope at all." Chiara Lubich expressed herself in this way, with realism, in her message which was received by the assembly in a climate of deep respect. In it she offered a solution as well: that in spite of these contrasts, divisions and discriminations, the world tends toward unity. A renewed commitment on the part of all could do much to obtain concrete results, especially if all those who believe in a God who is a Father of all truly committed themselves.

It was a wish which already expressed the commitment all the participants wanted to act upon. Dr. John Taylor, newly appointed Secretary-General of the WCRP, thanked Chiara warmly before the whole assembly. He made reference to all the difficulties encountered during the preparations and the need for mutual forgiveness, mutual respect and understanding. He then added: "I hope that the spirituality of Chiara, the spirit of love and unity, may fill the hearts of each one of us who has participated in this conference."

The World Conference of Relgions for Peace is the only organization of its kind. It is not merely a "pacifist" organization; neither does it aim to "unify" all religions into one body. According to the definition that the WCRP has given of itself, it wants to share the principles, the values and convictions which are at the basis of each religious tradition, thus putting into relief the universal values that each one of the different religions can offer to promote peace.

In fact, the delegates of all the world religions and of almost all the different Christian traditions present in Nairobi met also to get to know one another, to bring into relief human values which believers carry within themselves and to establish a common basis upon which to work for peace and social justice.

The meeting place of the conference moved from the Kenyatta Conference Center to the Kenya Technical Teacher College (KTTC) where all the delegates could be comfortably accommodated. Here the work was organized and divided among three study commissions and subdivided into eight smaller groups. In each group there were representatives of the Hindu and Buddhist religions,

Nikkyo Niwano, President of the Rissho Kosei-kai, is one of the founders of the Conference together with Catholic Archbishop Angelo Fernandes. In the photo at left Rev. Niwano with Badru Katregga, a Moslem from Kenya who co-ordinated the youth congress. One of the novelties of the conference was the presence of over 100 young people who contributed with the vitality of a new generation eager to collaborate in concrete and inter-religious programs for peace.

the larger number being the Rissho Kosei-kai, headed by its President Nikkyo Niwano. Present also, the Buddhist and Confucianist delegates of the Peoples Republic of China.

The Commission dealing with "Human Dignity, Social Justice and Development of the Human Person as a whole," faced important issues: the violation of human rights in many countries, political refugees, racial discrimination... There were also Israeli and Palestinian delegates, Sikhs and Hindus from Indian Punjab, Moslems and Christians from Sudan, Greek Orthodox and Moslems from Cyprus, a delegation from Iran and from the Amerindian peoples of the United States and Canada.

Logically there were differences of opinion on how to approach the issues, but the main goal of the conference was to promote dialogue among the participants, that is, to encourage them to listen to one another in the common search for new solutions prompted by a spirit of humility on the part of every believer. The day began with a period of prayer and meditation directed by a representative of one religion—a different one each day. It seemed that every day ended with the ever-stronger conviction in everyone's heart that there will never be peace without mutual forgiveness and the commitment to love our neighbors as ourselves.

Dr. John Taylor, a Methodist from England said, "The greatest experience for me has been to see people who came here as enemies and who are leaving here as friends; to see people who were perhaps unable to establish a dialogue with the opposite faction, or even unable to pray for each other and who now pray for one another and talk to one another and want to work together for peace."

Therefore this Conference did serve as a training ground for dialogue and peace.

The final declaration which was read at the conclusion of the conference revealed how much work was accomplished in eight days: "We acknowledge the painful fact that religion too often has been misused in areas of strife and conflict to intensify division and polarization. Religious people have too often failed to take the lead in...taking practical steps toward change...And yet our affirmation is one of hope.

Nairobi has changed us. We have been able to build trust... We bear the testimony of experience that world community is possible."

The presence of 100 youth who had gathered together and prepared themselves for 2 days before the Congress contributed to reinforcing mutual trust. Among them there were many Gen from the Focolare Movement in Kenya.

As for the line of action to be followed by the WCRP the Nairobi Declaration indicates: Disarmament of both nuclear and conventional weapons to be attained in collaboration with all the other forces engaged in working for peace but above all social commitment, because: "Disarmament means liberation not only from arsenals of weapons ready for use, but from the perpetual fear and insecurity which have accomapanied our obsession with the instruments of death. Development means liberation from hunger and poverty; it means a just sharing of the natural and economic resources ►

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CHIARA LUBICH'S MESSAGE

If we look around at our world today, we must say that it is marked by great tension: tension between East and West, between North and South, tension in precise areas of the globe, such as the Middle East, South Africa, Central America... Terrorism exists in various forms in more than a single nation. There are wars under way, or which have just ended, and others which may break out. There is the possibility of a nuclear disaster. There are social inequalities, racist divisions... and countless other evils.

All this is so entirely out of proportion to any possibility of intervention, as individuals, groups or even nations, that it would seem useless to hope at all.

Humanly speaking, this is all true, and we can witness it day after day. And yet, if we are even a little bit sensitive to another way of seeing which is not merely an earthly one, if we let ourselves be guided by the Spirit, who manifests himself through the signs of the times, we must note something else as well: that in spite of all this contrast, in spite of the divisions and discrimination, *the world*—paradoxically—*is moving towards unity, towards peace.*

Here are some examples of this.

Within Christianity, the various Churches and ecclesial communities, after centuries of indifference and struggle, are working now to unite. The World Council of Churches, for example, is an evident sign of this trend.

In the Catholic Church there has been the Second Vatican Council, whose documents often reflect the theme of unity, and, as a result, Secretariats have been formed for the purpose of promoting Christian unity, for encouraging dialogue with the faithful of other religions and with all persons of good will.

Among Christians, as among believers of other religions, spiritual movements have come to life emphasizing the concept of unity and the community, and often fostering universal fellowship.

Natalia Dalla Piccola who read the message of Chiara Lubich at the conference in Nairobi.

This Conference itself, which has brought persons of the most varied religions of the world together for these days here in Nairobi, is a sign of this present-day impetus.

There are nations with varying histories, cultures and languages which, in spite of failures and great fatigue, refuse to give up on an ideal of unity and confederation, as in Europe, for example. Even ideologies, which we believers cannot share, are trying to resolve the problems of the world in a global sense.

Many international bodies and organizations, such as the United Nations, are talking about and working to achieve unity, and nowadays the means of mass communication are able to transform our world into a community, a family.

Truly, if we consider humanity from this perspective, we must come to the conclusion that *in the world today there is a real thrust towards unity.* It is a sign of the times, which can give us an insight into the plan God has for humanity today.

This intuition, this view of things, tells us that we are not alone in wanting universal brotherhood and therefore peace. For although unity has been God's will since the very creation of the world, it is also his specific wish for this, our twentieth century, as well as for the new century about to begin.

Thus, in working along this line we are in harmony with God's will, and if this is so, his help and grace will not be lacking, also in this immense task to which we have pledged our efforts: unity among Religions for the sake of peace.

We all believe in Someone or in something which transcends us. We all believe in God, or in a truth, which for us Christians bears a name: Father. He is the foundation of universal brotherhood. We cannot believe in a father without acting as brothers and sisters toward all human creatures.

John Taylor (center) Secretary General of the WCRP and the Anglican Bishop of South Africa, Bishop Tutu (right) who is shown being interviewed by an Italian journalist.

With him we can contribute in an effective way towards *universal brotherhood*, which also means contributing to a *solid peace*. Looking to him we see all persons as potential candidates for this brotherhood, regardless of race or nation, ideology or creed.

My wish is that this Conference may bring a new contribution towards peace in the world.

May this peace reign first of all *in the hearts* of men and women, in their personal relationship with God. Our faith tells us that the human person has been "created in the image and likeness" of God. He or she is God's counterpart, his "you." This is the sublime dignity which God willed and planned for us. Therefore the human person reaches total fulfillment and hence finds peace in a constant relationship of communion with God.

My wish is also that this Conference may give impetus towards a decision to act towards every other human being in that manner called *love*. That each individual—the greatest number possible—may love his neighbor as himself; that this love become service; that this service be expressed concretely in each person "making himself one" with others: in making himself weak with the weak, ignorant with those who lack learning or instruction, suffering with those who suffer, in making himself all things to all men, in order that many may be pulled along into this same current of love. And that God the Father, for this love which binds brothers and sisters together, may somehow feel impelled to come and dwell among men.

Then he will be in the midst of us all, also here in Nairobi, in this open dialogue, sustained by the respect and the mutual love among members of different religions. And he will surely suggest sound proposals and effective initiatives in view of this year's program, which is centered on human dignity and world peace.

Surely he will make us experience, for the Religion which elevates us all, that spiritual unity which binds everyone together and which can become more and more the *soul of the world*, the soul of humanity today.

(Continued from page 7)

of the world and the investment of our energies in life, and in the future."

On the morning of August 31, we met at the Kenyatta Conference Center once again for the final voting which would ratify the various documents. All the delegates touched directly by the experience of the African continent suffering for months and even years from drought, decided on a plan of action offering financial aid of $400,000.

A center for the coordination and assistance of political refugees mainly from Uganda will open in Nairobi and will be staffed by a number of youth of the WCRP in Africa and by the Gen of the Focolare Movement and financed by an international fund of the conference. A similar project has been planned for India.

The young people want to organize inter-religious activities coinciding with the Year of the Youth promoted by the United Nations, and then, meetings with people of different religions to pray for peace in different areas of the world.

In this regard the delegates decided on a day of prayer and fasting once a month for peace. ►

A deep atmosphere of recollection dominated the ten days of the conference. There were beautiful prayers from each faith. A Moslem: "You who created me, follow us on our path. You know that we want to be united." A Christian: "Oh God, whose goodness fills the earth, whose love embraces all of humanity, give us the wisdom and the understanding to love you so that we raise ourselves up over our limitations and see the human race as one family." A Buddhist: "Let us respect each other's faith, supporting one another; let us work together to establish justice and peace in the world." A Jewish participant: "In our darkness help us to find your light, and in our loneliness to discover many others like ourselves." A Shintoist: "God created all men and women. Before God we are all members of one family." A Sikh: "In order for this planet to support life and be free from human injustice, for us and the coming generations, we must raise ourselves above our prejudices and abandon our individual factions." A Hindu: "There is only one very high goal, to be free even while living here on earth; and only one very high condition of human awareness, to be in that great joy of meditating on the Supreme Spirit."

The Japanese, Buddhists, Shintoists and Christians greatly supported this initiative. By fasting once a month they expect to collect $20,000 to be used in projects promoting peace.

We certainly have not reached total disarmament yet, but a light of hope has been lit in Nairobi. Now we understand more fully why Archbishop Arinze who read the Pope's message, said "The World Conference of Religions for Peace is one of the precious gifts which God has given to today's world."

The Conference came to an end. The atmosphere of solemnity which had characterized the opening day had given way to the atmosphere of a family.

Members of the Rissho Kosei-kai and the Gen holding hands in a circle sang in Japanese and English. Many of the participants left their places to join them; the circle became wider and many were moved.

Forty members of the Focolare Movement worked as volunteers for the duration of the Conference.

The Conference in Nairobi is over. WCRP enlarged its body of directors to include ten co-presidents from all the great religions and from all continents. The body of directors will now be helped by an international council made up of sixty members of which eleven from European countries; among them Miss Natalia Dalla Piccola of the Focolare Movement.

Now comes the moment to see how to put into pactice the resolutions reached during those days. The most ambitious project is, perhaps, to work towards having different countries include a course on "Education towards peace" in their school programs. □

The Church and Work

by Vera Araujo

The New Humanity Convention held in June of this year took an important look at various aspects of the world of work. In this issue we are publishing a talk on the role of the Church in the area of human work.

The world of economy and work, an area of concern to many today, is undoubtedly at the center of the social question.

The social question, as we know, is the conflict which stems from the situation created in the previous century with the advent of the industrial revolution and the supporting ideas of the victorious bourgeois during the French Revolution.

At first it appeared as the "working question" because the two components in conflict were the owners, those who held the capital, and the proletariat who represented the working world. From its birth until today the social question has undergone constant and profound evolution. New elements are being added to it such as the introduction of new energy sources, automation, the growing awareness of the limits of our natural resources and the damage done through pollution, the end of colonialism and the arrival onto the political scene of nations which were once subjects and now demand their rightful place in the making of international decisions.

To say it briefly, the social question today has become a worldwide question, a planetary question because the difficulties which were once at the basis of the question of work are in conflict today above all at an international level, between developed nations and nations on their way to development.

The Church with its social encyclicals has always followed these events closely, and punctually illustrated the new dimensions to the problem. Pope Paul VI in the encyclical *Populorum Progressio* stated: "Today the principal fact that we must all recognize is that the social question has become worldwide. This teaching is important and its application urgent"(no. 3).

The fact is that in the world of economy not only the dignity of the individual person must be safeguarded, but the dignity of each individual nation as well.

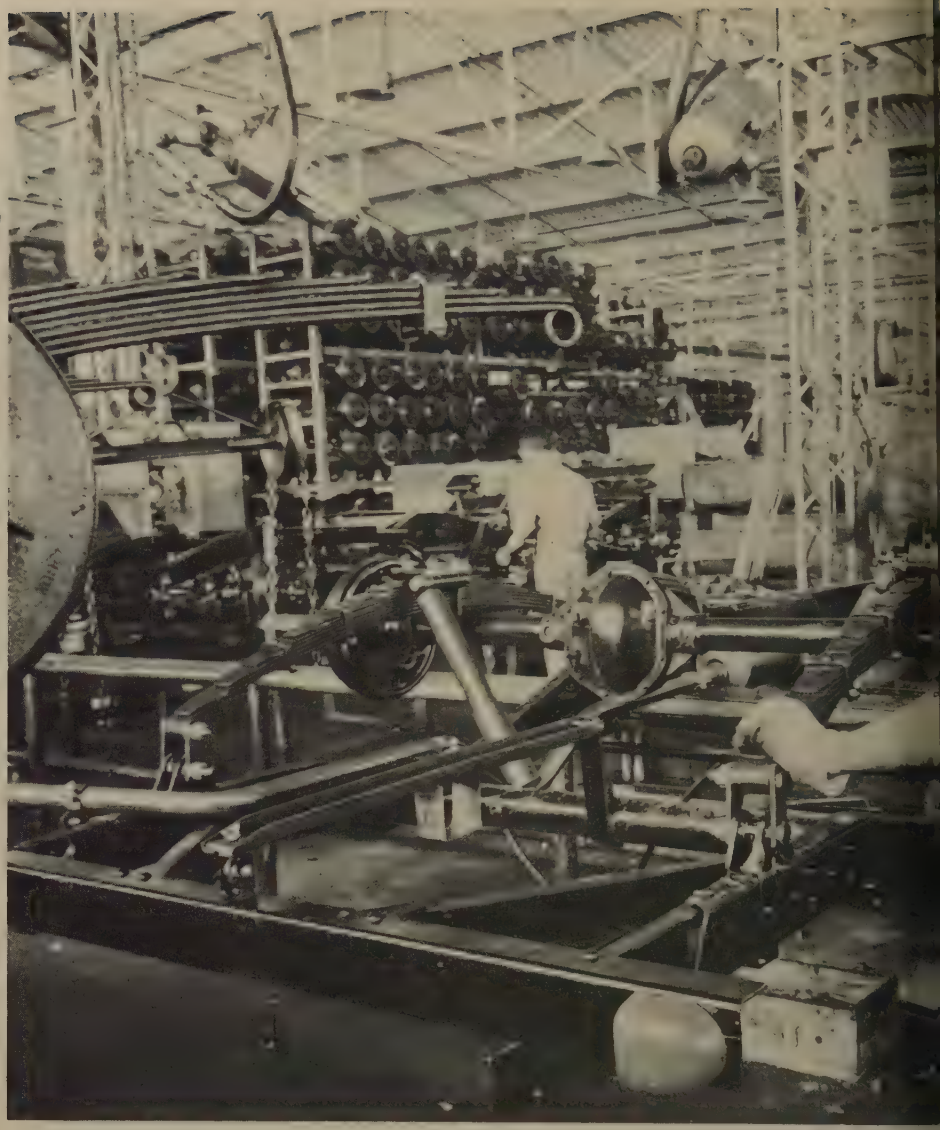
The sociological question demands in-depth reflection on the ethical principles which must inspire our entire life and all economic systems.

The first norm is the principal of solidarity. "The solidarity," Pope John XXIII wrote in *Mater et Magistra*, "which binds all men and makes them members, in a sense, of the same family requires that nations enjoying an abundance of material goods should not remain indifferent to those nations whose citizens suffer from internal problems that result in poverty, hunger and an inability to enjoy even the more elementary human rights" (no. 144).

Pope Paul VI's appeal takes on an evermore urgent significance: "Today the peoples in hunger are making a dramatic appeal to the peoples blessed with abundance. The Church shudders at this cry of anguish and calls each one to give a loving response of charity to this brother's cry for help" (no. 3).

If the principle of solidarity is a principle of natural rights, a universal bond among all peoples, for us as Christians it is even more of an imperative. It means penetrating the world of economy and work with the basic truth of the Christian message. All people, as children of the one Father who is in heaven, are brothers and sisters to one another in Christ. This means that economic relationships and products must give evidence to the radicality of Jesus' mandate: "Love one another." On a worldwide dimension—as Chiara Lubich once wrote—it means "Love your neighbor's country as you love your own."

It is important here to underline the radicality of the demands of the Gospel applied to the world of production. It is a field wherein the selfish interests of individuals, groups and nations often clash, but it could become the ground for a new economy, a new type of work which reflects the loving providence of the Father and a factual communion of goods among all. ►



In *Octogesima Adveniens* Pope Paul VI stated that economic activity, something which is very necessary, can be a wellspring of fraternity and a sign of providence if it is placed at the service of the human person (no. 46). In order for this to take place there must be the promotion of a large movement of participation by workers there where production takes place—in the industry itself.

"In economic enterprises," *Gaudium et Spes* confirms, "it is persons who work together, that is, free and independent human beings created to the image of God. Therefore, the active participation of everyone in the running of an enterprise should be promoted. This participation should be exercised in appropriately determined ways. It should take into account each person's function... It should provide for the necessary unity of operations" (no. 68).

With this perspective in mind it is clear then that among the factors involved in the world of work, the human factor, that is, work, is pre-eminent among all the other factors and elements. This element of Christian thought is rich in significance for everyone but above all for those who believe.

Human work comes before capital, before property, before economic laws.

Before capital

"We must emphasize," Pope John Paul II affirmed in *Laborem Excercens*, "and give prominence to the primacy of man in the production process, *the primacy of man over all things*. Everything contained in the concept of capital in the strict sense is only a collection of things. Man at the subject of work, and independently of the work that he does—man alone is a person" (no. 12).

Before property

Gaudium et Spes spoke out strongly in reference to this point: "God intended the earth and all that it contains for the use of every human being and people ... attention must always be paid to the universal purpose for which created goods are meant" (no. 69).

The expression "God destined the earth and all that is in it" includes all the products of our work, not just natural resources. Paul VI in fact explains in *Populorum Progressio* that every right to property is addressed to the fulfillment of the distribution of goods to all.

Pope John Paul II during his trip to Mexico asserted that all private property carries a heavy social mortgage.[1] This means that on every piece of property there exists the creditor's rights, in this case, society's.

Before economic laws

If we look again at *Gaudium et Spes* we find, "It too often happens, however, even in our day, that in one way or another workers are made slaves of their work. This situation can by no means be justified by so-called economic laws. The entire process of productive work,

United Nations

therefore must be adapted to the needs of the person and to the requirements of his life, above all his domestic life" (no. 67).

In view of this, work becomes the essential key to the whole social question and this comes very powerfully into relief in *Laborem Exercens*.

In work—and we can never tire of repeating this—what counts is the working person.

Speaking to the International Labor Organization in Geneva in 1969 Pope Paul VI affirmed: "*In work it is man who comes first.* Whether he is an artist or an artisan, contractor, peasant or worker, manual or intellectual; it is always man who works, it is for man that he works. An end has been put to the priority of work over the worker, to the supremacy of technical and economic necessities over human needs. Never again will work be superior to the worker. But always work will be *for* the worker; work will be *in the service of man*, of every man and of all mankind."[2]

An economy therefore that wants at its center the working person must express itself in structures which not only respect but promote the dignity of the human person. Christians must see as immoral every economic system wherein the person is enslaved by the structures.

The present-day economic situation is not very encouraging under this aspect. *Redemptor hominis* reaffirms it with vigor. Referring specifically to the consumer society which enslaves the person while a large part of humanity suffers in need, John Paul II stated: "So widespread is the phenomenon that it brings into question the financial, monetary, production and commercial mechanisms that, resting on various political pressures, support the world economy. These are proving incapable either of remedying the unjust social situations inherited from the past or of dealing with the urgent challenges and ethical demands of the present. By submitting man to tensions created by himself, dilapidating at an accelerated pace material and energy resources, and compromising the geophysical environment, these structures unceasingly make the areas of misery spread, accompanied by anguish, frustration and bitterness" (no. 16).

The world of economy and work urgently demands a great commitment from everyone in order to change unjust structures.

In *Octogesima Adveniens* Paul VI invites us all to take on this task, difficult yes, but not impossible. "Today human beings yearn to free themselves from need and from control by outsiders. But this sort of liberation starts with interior liberty, which must be regained with regard to ones own possessions and actions. Interior liberation cannot be won, however, except though a transcendent love for man and a genuine readiness to serve" (no. 45).

New structures, therefore, are needed which promote the dignity of men and women and nations—structures which make it possible to achieve a concrete communion of goods. This means increasing the deep significance of solidarity within the world of economy and work and between the world of economy and work and the whole of society.

This, in fact, was the hope Pope John Paul II expressed in his talk to the International Labor Organization. "The solidarity in the world of work will, therefore, be a solidarity that broadens horizons to include not only the interests of individuals in particular groups but the *common good of society as a whole*, whether nationally, internationally or worldwide. It will be a solidarity *for* work, manifesting itself in the struggle *for* justice and truth in social life."[3] □

1) See Address to the Indians at Oaxaco, Mexico, January 29, 1979. 2) Pope Paul VI to the ILO, June 10, 1969. 3) Pope John Paul II to the ILO, June 15, 1982.

Christmas 1984

On this Christmas, Lord,
we entrust to you those who are "far" from you:
the many who were once "close"
and now no longer are
because the evils of the world
led them astray;

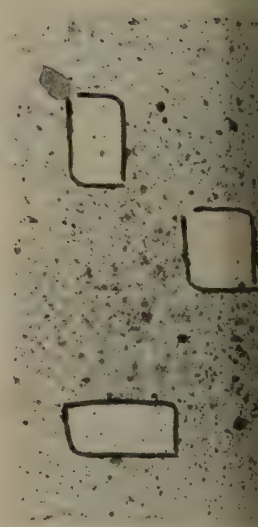
those who think they have found you,
but do not yet know
that one day, a most beautiful day
you came on earth as a child;

those who do not know you
but seek you with a sincere heart.

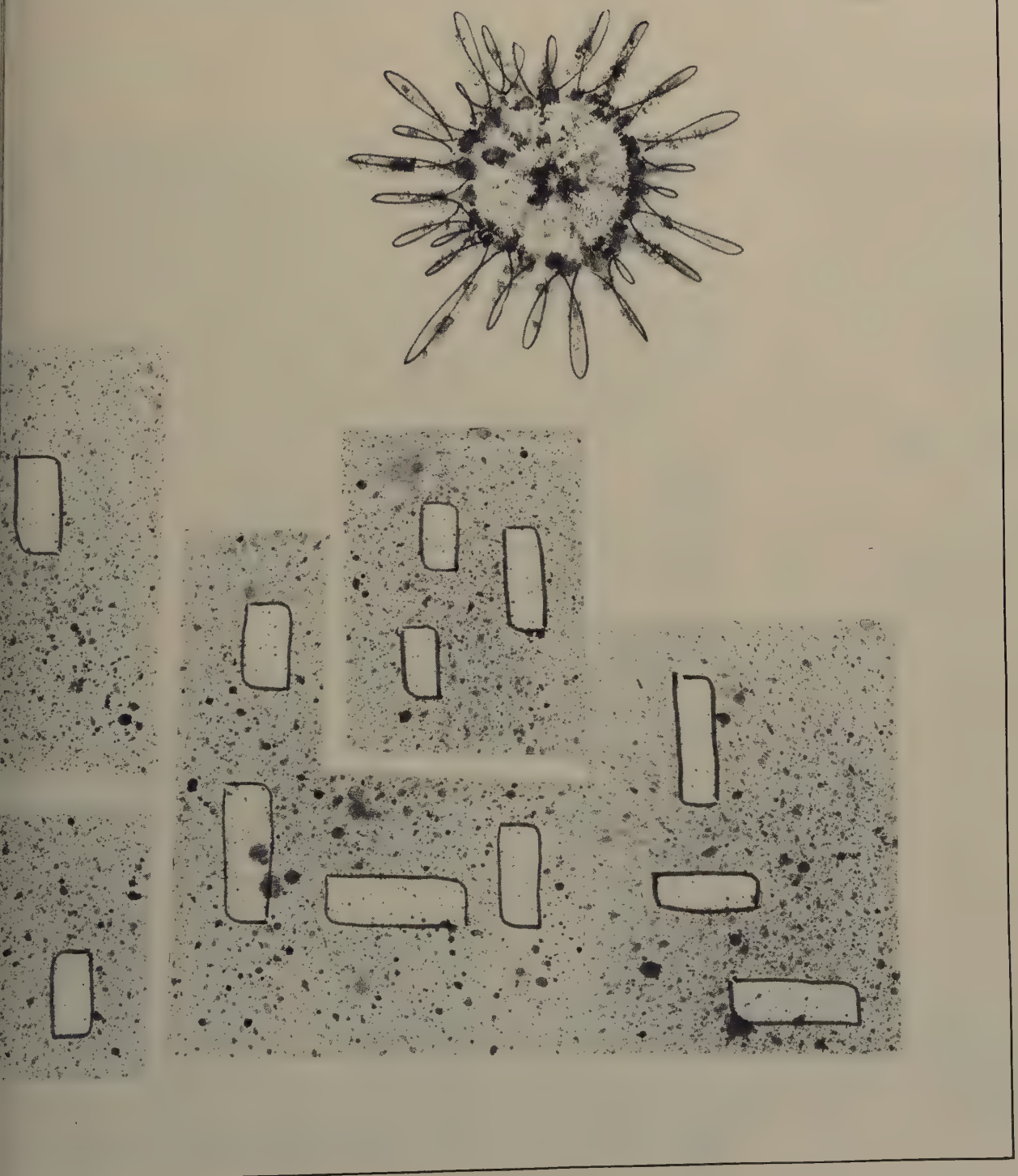
This Christmas, Lord, we entrust to you especially
those who are atheists, those without faith
and they are millions and millions today in the world.

We entrust them to you so that against the background
of their often-present good will
a ray of light may dawn,
the guiding star may shine for a moment
and they may experience, at least in that moment,
the fullness of joy experienced by those
who come to know and love you.

We entrust to you those who are "far" from you
so that they may come to know
that it is especially for them
that one day you became a child.



CHIARA LUBICH



First bear witness...

In our series on the first centuries of Christianity St. Basil emerges as a towering figure in the Eastern Christian world, during the period when the Arian heresy was undermining the whole of the Empire.

by SILVANO COLA

From a bird's-eye view the over-all impression of the Empire's religious state is one of relative calm. It is more noticeable in the West where for example, Eusebius, Bishop of Vercelli, is totally able to dedicate himself to his vast diocese (which encompasses the greater part of Piedmont and some areas beyond the Alps), without controversies or arguments with the Arians... a saint with great mental ability: and Auxentius, Bishop of Milan, although he had had a head-on confrontation with St. Hilary who had called him a blasphemer and an enemy of Christ, because he was an Arian, has managed to keep his diocese in peace because he withdrew his support from the Rimini-Seleucia creed, and declared that 'Christ is truly God, identical with the Father in divinity and substance'. The situation is much the same with all the other bishops, even with those who had fallen into the Rimini trap. Whenever they

Saint Basil, Doctor of the Church. A mosaic in the baptistry of St. Mark's Basilica in Venice.

hen speak

e asked face to face as to hich creed they adhere, they nswer quite naturally... "The icaean, of course. What else?" is patently obvious that, in heir heart of hearts, they had ever doubted that the Son of od was God.

In the East, however, skirishes are still to be seen—but a calmer manner than before.

I have heard, however, amongst ther things, that St. Martin—he present Bishop of Tours who was the man who cut his loak in two with his sword so s to give half to a poor man who was dying of cold)—when e visited his native area of Pannonia got into something of n 'incident' simply because he rotested against the local riest who was preaching the Arian heresy there in the arish church. The Arians were urious, but they merely tried o drive him outside the walls f the city.

While I was in Sirmium I attended a trial brought by Bishop Germinius (whom we have already met with Bishops Ursacius and Valens in the Rimini affair!), who was currently bishop of that city, against three laymen who had been declared 'catholics' and had been imprisoned for some time awaiting 'justice'! I attempted to make a verbatim report of the hearing on January 13th, 366 A.D., when a man called Eraclianus was brought to trial...

Bishop Germinius: Now let us have the truth! Was it those two exiled jailbirds, Eusebius of Vercellius and Hilary of Poitiers, who put all these ideas into your heads?

Eraclianus: I don't deny it; but not only them. There are a lot of bishops and priests, as well as laity, who,—despite you—continue to believe in the true faith of Nicaea; and if you'd only try to modify your methods of violent repression, you'd realize...

Germinius: Now tell me: how did you receive baptism?

Eraclianus: You baptized me in the Name of the Father, and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit: and not in the name of a greater God or a slightly lesser God, because he was created!

Germinius: Bring in his companions, Firmian and Aurelian, and tell them to sign the Rimini Creed.

The Three Accused: (After reading the text) And this is the faith of the Church? It is heresy!

The Bishop rose; (imagine the tension!) and unexpectedy he says: "Go away! And if you will, go with my blessing."

In fact, Germinius had realized that the Arian bishops were merely trying to hold onto their bishopries, and whoever didn't succeed was simply creating his own church around himself. This just could not be right. A few days after this trial, Germinius, despite the fury of Ursacius and Valens, publically proclaimed in his own Cathedral, that "the Son is 'like the Father' in everything, in Divinity, splendor, majesty and power." Then he wrote to his regional bishops ►

A view of the Turkish city of Kayseri, the ancient Cesarea of Cappadocia where Basil was born. When he became bishop of that same city in the year 370 he built a true "city of charity" for the care of lepers and people with other serious diseases.

saying that, on reflection, the "original" faith is that of Nicaea.

So, in Asia Minor also, a new council was held, at Lampsaco, which retracts and condemns the Rimini Creed, maintaining that the phrase 'similar in every way' can be adapted to indicate a distinction between the Father and the Son as 'two divine persons'. The majority of the other Asian bishops, in order to re-enter into Communion with the Church of Rome, re-affirm the Nicaean Creed and condemn all the deviations that there have been since the year 325 A.D. It seems that miracles still happen.

Despite all the struggles, the faith of us all is now firmly set on this: the Son of God is a person distinct from the Father; God like the Father; One only God with the Father.

Even so, the problems and the arguments continue. So far as the relationship between the Father and the Son is concerned, all is well... but who is the Holy Spirit? And what is the relationship between the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit? Is it the same as that between the Father and the Son?

Of course the great Athanasius, back in 353 A.D., wanted the Nicaean Creed properly furnished with a clear affirmation that the Holy Spirit is God, 'consubstantial' with the Father and the Son. Another great personality; a man called Didimus (known as 'the Blind One', because he lost his sight at the age of four), who is considered something of a phenomenon by everyone because despite his handicap he has gained encyclopaedic knowledge without ever having been to school. (Athanasius has even put him in charge of the Catechetics School in Alexandria.) Today Didimus is showing particular interest in one of his students, Jerome of Strido. The important thing is that Didimus has just dictated a large book that is actually entitled 'The Holy Spirit', in which he shows that even the Spirit is not something 'created' but, on the contrary, is a divine Person, distinct from the Father and the Son, but equal to them in substance and in every other way, and constituting with them, One God in Three Persons, exactly as Jesus gave us to understand in the Gospel.

But why is it necessary to explain it at all, if ordinary Christians already accept it and believe it as a given fact? Because some eccentric genius began to say that if the Son of God is unique, 'generated' by the Father and the Holy Spirit... which is not generated: then logically it must have been 'created'; and so, in consequence, the Holy Spirit is not God but simply a 'creature'. A most important question must then be asked, however, 'How then could the Holy Spirit sanctify us if the Holy Spirit is not God?'

Luckily, or should I say, due to Divine providence, we now have, at Caesarea in Capadocia, Bishop Basil, who will I am sure, go down in history with the same fame as Athanasius. In fact it almost seems as if Athanasius waited to die until there was Basil ready to take his place within the Church. And that was none too soon!

On the other hand, Basil was—so to speak—a 'natural',

and it must always have been easy to see what he would become. His grandmother was none other than St. Macrina (Senior); his father Basil (Senior) was the famous lawyer who had been a disciple of St. Gregory Thaumaturgus. His mother, Emmelia, was the daughter of a martyr and brought ten children into the world including the young Basil who was to carry on his father's name. As we all know it is not the memory of his father that Basil perpetuated. As it has been seen by everyone, the future will forget the lawyer for the bishop when they speak of Basil 'the Great'! His elder sister, named Macrina after her grandmother, has founded a convent, and is already spoken of as model of the ascetic life. She surprised everyone by taking a vow of virginity after the death of her fiancé, even

The heights of Goreme, some forty miles from Caesarea, are characterized by strange spines of volcanic rock, and pinnacles modelled by natural forces. In the fourth century it was the center of Christian monasticism, and the region is famous for its rock churches. In his youth Basil followed the monastic life for which he felt a vocation, but which he was forced to abdicate in order to take up the defense of othodoxy against Arianism.

though there was a whole string of fine young men seeking her hand in marriage. Basil has already become a bishop, but his brothers are all clearly destined for the episcopate—Gregory in the diocese of Nyssa; and Peter in Sebaste. (As for their mother, Emmelia, everyone already looks upon her as a saint.)

Basil, however, despite the extent of his Christian teachings, did not immediately give up either his studies or his personal freedom! No sooner had he completed his studies in Caesarea than he went on to extend his learning first in Constantinople, and then in Athens. In Athens, under the shadow of the Acropolis, he met, as it now seems inevitable that these two momentous personalities had to meet, Gregory of Nazianzus. A lasting friendship was born. They spent five years dreaming and planning together under the shade of the Parthenon. When, however, Basil returned to Caesarea to begin his life again he saw, in the example of his sister Macrina, just how empty had been the years he had just spent, and how hollow had been the plans he had longed to realize. Instead he wanted to learn about the lives of the monks in Egypt, Palestine, Syria and Mesopotamia. When he returned from these long journeys he did the one thing he had not planned to do... he sold all his inheritance, gave away everything he earned from this to the poor and retired into solitude. Soon after that he founded a monastery, and then another, and yet another...

In 370 the people of his city, Caesarea, made him their bishop, 'because the truth is in danger!' His first thoughts, however, are not of Arius, but of building new hospitals for the sick and the victims of the frequent epidemics. All this can be seen today as a vast charitable network, the like of which has never been seen before. Some of the people call it 'The Basiliade'.

At first it was not easy to appreciate why he focused his attentions on such material things, rather than throwing himself into discussion against the Arians, and those semi-Arians who were now calling into doubt the divinity of the Holy Spirit. However, late, I believe I have understood the evangelical genius of Basil's diplomacy: it was a case of 'first bear witness... then speak'. And he most certainly did speak!

When he had been proclaimed bishop he was almost immediately summoned to the Prefect, whose name was Modestus, to answer for his faith to a man who had, in the name of the Emperor Valens, to demand that Basil repudiate the word 'consubstantial' in the Nicene Creed.

"You threaten me with the forfeiture of the best things in life! But I haven't a penny in the world. You hold the threat of exile over me: but all the world is for me an exile, for my homeland is in heaven! Torture, then? I am so weak you would have to hit me but once! Then it must be death? But that is what I most look forward to! Do then what you think is right; but let the Emperor know that no cruelty whatsoever will make us adhere to impiety." So speaks Basil, Bishop of Caesarea.

Of the Holy Trinity, Basil says to all heretics, "If you do not admit to a 'one and common existence' in God you are ►

The Acropolis in Athens. Here Basil studied between 350 and 356 A.D.

polytheists, like the pagans: and if you do not admit the 'distinction between the three persons' of God you have not understood the faith of Christ. The humanity which we all share is common to us all, isn't it? Yet one is called Eunomius and I am called Basil, and we are distinguished one from the other by our own personal characteristics! And so it is with the Trinity! The 'essence' is common to all three; but the Father is Father because he creates: the Son is Son because he is 'the only-begotten': and the Holy Spirit is the love which proceeds from the Father and the Son with the property of 'sanctification', which is all its own."

"That is why," he will continue, "the Christian life is a life of communion with God and one's neighbor. If even Jesus, in his perfection of love, had to wash the feet of the Apostles; who would be able to wash your feet if you were to live alone, separated from everyone? We are one body; Christ is the head and we are the members, linked to one another. Only if we are in unity, and in concord, one with another will we receive the Life of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is God, and lives in the saints who thus become his temple." Now I understand how it is that Basil took such a hold on the souls of people; and I understand, above all, why he wanted to found a monastic order, and so many charitable organizations. Love creates that 'communion' since it makes it possible for the spirit of Jesus to be present... thanks to mutual love... both in the individual and in the community.

I remember that the Emperor Julian "the Apostate", to try to show that paganism had nothing to envy in Christianity, also tried to found monasteries; and seeing that the greatest attraction of the Catholic Church lay mainly in its works of charity, appropriated a mountain of money to do the same! The recollection of it is almost laughable, since I was there to witness his total failure (but I must deny myself the satisfaction of yielding to this temptation)! The whole mighty structure of the state, both administrative and financial, was not capable of supporting and organizing the hospitals and shelters for the poor which the Church, by acts of charity and profound faith in God, was able to maintain.

You ask what is the explanation? Let me tell you. Bishop Basil is like a father who loves us. We are all his children, brothers and sisters, and if we are to return this love to our father we must love each other, different as we are, for this love is exactly the love which will make us, and all that we do, immortal; because we do them for the sole purpose of being able to love each other both more and better. And how can it be possible for others to do the things that we do if they do not accept the Holy Trinity? If they do not recognize the Father how can they feel like the family? If they do not feel like the family how can they recognize each other as brothers and sisters? If they do not recognize each other as brothers and sisters they only think of themselves and this begets discord and even war.

Truly, the Holy Trinity is a mystery, but it teaches us how to live. What a difference there is between Basil's 'Family' and the contemporary dynastic family of the Emperor Constantine! Constantine 'the Great' forced his father-in-law Maximian to kill himself; his former ally Licinius, the brother of his step-sister Constanza, he had murdered; his son Crispus, and his wife Fausta, he also had murdered! His third son, Constans, so that he would only have to share the power with his brothers, Constantius II and Constans II, had his cousin murdered because his father had included him in his will as co-heir: and later he fought and killed his brother Constantius II!

Two rather different worlds! But thus you see that it is still possible, while still in this world, to live the life of heaven—look at the family of Basil: or, on the contrary, to live the life of hell—look at the family of Constantine. □

WORD OF LIFE

"Over all these virtues put on love, which binds the rest together and makes them perfect."
(Col. 3:14)

The word makes us live.

The word makes us free.

The word guarantees happiness.

The word converts.

The word purifies us.

The word draws us to our specific vocations.

The word brings forth the hatred of the world and the sanctity of the disciple.

The word makes us see the truth.

The word brings comfort.

The word gives us joy.

The word produces works.

The word gives wisdom.

The word preserves us from human concerns.

The word obtains everything.

The word brings about union with God.

The word gives us hope of eternal life.

The word makes us one.

The word changes one's mentality.

The word makes each soul a heaven.

This is a word of fundamental importance for our life and the Christian witness we wish to bear.

It is part of a longer passage in which the Apostle Paul encourages the Christians of Colossea to put aside the sinful customs of their former life and clothe themselves with those inner attitudes that suit the person who has been completely renewed by Christ, that is mercy, goodness, humility, meekness, patience, forebearance and mutual forgiveness. At the end the Apostle concludes: **"Over all these virtues put on love, which binds the rest together and makes them perfect."**

An image which Paul is fond of and which he calls upon also here, is the image of clothing. He urges the faithful to clothe themselves in all the above virtues which make up the wardrobe of the new man, and then to cover all these with the cloak of love, which is the perfect bond and knot.

The virtue of love for Paul is like a belt which gathers up and holds the rest of the clothing together; it is the virtue which completes a Christian outfit. It is like a bond of perfection that links all the above-mentioned virtues together and ensures their presence, or, as someone might say—but practically speaking it is the same idea—love unites the members of the Christian community in a perfect way.

"Over all these virtues put on love, which binds the rest together and makes them perfect."

At the moment of baptism Christians, without doubt clothed themselves with Jesus (Gal. 3:27), and, with Jesus, they clothed themselves with love together with all the other virtues that necessarily accompany it.

However, if it is true that through Baptism they come to possess love, it is also true that it is in them in the form of a seed which should eventually grow and develop fully. It is for this reason that the Apostle urges Christians not to take this virtue for granted, but to develop it, to clothe themselves in it in a visible way, avoiding the danger of remaining on the abstract level of good intentions or illusions.

"Over all these virtues put on love, which binds the rest together and makes them perfect."

We know that goodness, meekness, mercy and the other virtues listed previously by the Apostle are substantially identified with love. Yet the Apostle says: "Over all these virtues put on love." The fact is that while we know that these virtues are different aspects of love, he wants to emphasize love in its essence, in its roots, from which stem all its various expressions.

Jesus gave us an explanation of love when he said: "Love one another as I have loved you" (Jn. 13:34). Love, therefore, means to love our neighbor with the same heart as Jesus, that is, to the point of being ready to give our life. It means to serve our neighbors and make ourselves "one" with

them in the way that Jesus made himself "one" with us. It means to love our neighbor by dying to our own ego and forgetting ourselves. In this way all the other virtues flourish within us. They are fortified and made secure.

"Over all these virtues put on love, which binds the rest together and makes them perfect."

St. Paul's words invite us, therefore, to examine how much of our life is motivated by love; how willing we are to die to ourselves in order to love our neighbor always better.

We know, however, that to reach that point it takes considerable effort; it takes perseverance and, above all, great patience with ourselves.

There will always be many opportunities, though, and with them we can continually train ourselves. There will be opportunities in our family, in the community, at school, and on the job. It will be our love for the cross which will make us more sensitive, and better able to listen, to understand the problems and worries of others; to share their joys and sufferings; to break down the barriers that still exist; to put aside attitudes of pride, rivalry, envy, resentment over a wrong we might have received, to overcome that horrible inclination to judge and criticize; to get out of our selfish isolation and offer our help to those in need, to the lonely; to build everywhere the unity Jesus prayed for.

Isn't that what every truly Christian heart is longing for?

Chiara Lubich

EXPERIENCES

The following are experiences in living the Gospel which some of our readers have shared with us.

WHAT MATTERS MOST

When Jim arrived home from college for spring break I was really excited. We've always had a special relationship and even his being away from home didn't seem to take its toll on being able to share our lives, and keep in touch often.

As parents of children away at school you sometimes give in to luxuries that normally would not be acceptable. We had received our telephone bill for the month before and found an unusually large amount for our son's calls to a few friends back home. I was shocked and a little put out that so many calls had been made. It was my task to figure out how I was to work this bill into an already stretched family budget. During my next conversation with him I explained the situation trying to understand his need to call some close friends that he doesn't get to see very often. He assured me it wouldn't happen again.

Jim was home with us for spring break when I received the next telephone bill. When I saw it, I found that there were again many calls that he had made and the bill was quite large. I was frustrated at that moment because this excessive phone bill arrived in a month where many insurance payments were also due. It really looked hopeless. I saw Jim's calls as a total disregard of the family needs. As I was about to react with my human tendency, to respond angrily, I remembered the word of life: "My food is to do the will of the one who sent me, and to complete his work" (Jn. 4:34); and I understood that what mattered most in this situation was to maintain a rapport of mutual love with my son. I approached him with the bill and showed him all his calls. At first he said it couldn't be right, he didn't remember making so many; then he just kind of shrugged it off and dropped the subject. I went back to the kitchen to finish the bills saying nothing, trying to love Jesus in Jim as fully as I could. I was determined not to break unity with him over this. About an hour later he came into the kitchen, put his arms around me and said, "I'm sorry, mom, I must be getting really irresponsible and I don't want to be. Take what money you need to pay my portion of the bill and I promise you I won't make so many calls again." I felt a great relief; not only because the problem with my son's frequent phone calling seemed to be resolved, but most especially because the love and unity between us had been restored.

J.R.

A LITTLE PROJECT

Last September I was having lunch with a fellow teacher and the secretary of the school in which I teach. The three of us had shared on various occasions our mutual efforts of trying to put the Gospel into practice. The unity that day at lunch seemed particularly strong and we all felt the desire to meet regularly to continue this sharing. I felt that it could be a source of encouragement to all of us in our attempts to live the Gospel at work. Delighted, everyone agreed to meet every Friday during the lunch hour. Our group consisted of a Baptist, a member of a non-denominational church group, and myself, a Catholic. As the Baptist member of our group commented:"This is truly amazing! Ten years ago a sharing between a Baptist, a non-denominationalist, and especially a Catholic would have been unheard of."

The meetings of our heterogeneous little group began to bring about much fruit. After the first few, however, it became always more obvious that we needed to open ourselves to the problems surrounding us and work together towards resolving them.

The head custodian of the school was one of these problems. A man quite set in his ways, he usually did only what was required of him and no more. If a teacher asked him for a favor he usually refused by saying he was too busy and that it wasn't his job. The staff had started to talk about him in a very negative way beginning a vicious circle of mutual unkindness. The primary topic of discussion in the teacher's lounge had become the custodian—his laziness, his lack of cooperation, his unfriendliness, and finally how he could be gotten rid of. Their complaints to the principal had been taken back to him. This of course just aggravated the situation even more. The whole atmosphere of the school became affected by this constant exchange of negative feelings. In short this condition was disrupting many aspects of our school. It could be felt by the children and others who were not even directly involved.

We decided that this problem should become our first "project." We saw the need for mending broken relationships and were convinced that only love could bring this about. I shared with them the idea that if we could become "sponges", absorbing all that was negative, and counteract it with an act of love, perhaps we could help resolve this vicious circle. I saw this as a wonderful opportunity to be close to the One I have chosen for my life, Jesus Crucified and Forsaken.

One of the group added that we could look for occasions to compliment the custodian. Another said that if we just greeted him each day with a smile and a "Good morning" there would certainly be an improvement.

The next week the three of us concentrated hard on complimenting him, meeting negative comments with positive ones. One day, for instance, a teacher was being very critical. I listened and said: "Yes, but did you know that he helped the ladies in the cafeteria serve lunch to the children?" (This is a task that is not in his job description.) Within one week noticeable changes began to take place: The negative comments diminished and the custodian seemed happier. By the end of the second week no negative comments could be heard and the custodian was actually doing things for teachers that he had never done before. The principal commented that she could actually sense that the tension in the building was noticeably less.

The project of our little group remained our "secret"; but what we hoped for—an atmosphere of greater love and unity—began to be felt by all.

The relationship between the teachers and the custodian is quite a different one today. During a particular planning day (a day without students) the teachers and he went to a local restaurant to have lunch together; something that had never happened before. In a common effort to be a living solution to the disunity surrounding us, the unity of our own little group grew. It was noticed by our colleagues and two more have now become part of our "Friday sharings."

T.R.

Images FOR words

Photo by William L. Kaufman

Consider that God reigns only in the peaceful soul.

St. John of the Cross

FAMILY LIFE

Weakened family life is one of the greatest social ills of our time.
The "New Family" Movement has as its aim to bring the Focolare spirit of unity into family life, so that each family will be deeply united within itself and with other families.

A LOVING FATHER

This experience spans over a period of fourteen months, the length of time my husband was out of work after the plant at which he had worked for fourteen years closed down. The company he had worked for previously had gone bankrupt, and he had lost two jobs because the companies moved out of the city in which we live.

So, although this type of thing wasn't new for us, there was something different this time that made it new—it was our conviction that God is Love.

Sure, the usual worries cropped up—how to feed five children and two adults; would compensation plus my small salary from a part-time job be enough to support us; will there be another job in this period of bad economy for a man who turned forty and had no high school education? These were some of the worries that I found difficult to put aside.

Yet hadn't God always pulled us through before? Didn't Jesus say, "If two of you on earth agree to ask anything at all, it will be granted to you by my Father in heaven?"[1]

We had once prayed together like that for a house when there were seven of us in a five-room apartment with one closet. Our landlord of eleven years sold the building to a man who wanted us out and we had no savings for a down payment on a house. A few weeks later some friends offered to loan us a few thousand dollars in case we liked to buy a house. Within a few months we moved into our present house. Then there were many times when we didn't even ask, yet we knew God was watching over us, guiding and helping us.

I was pregnant with our sixth child when I sprained my ankle and was on crutches for almost four weeks. Now this just might sound like a disaster, yet for our family it was a precious gift. I had been working two part-time jobs to help pay tuition and bills. I was certain something had to change but I could not decide which job to quit. My family kept me busy too.

The first week after I sprained the ankle I was confined to bed. My family had to do everything. My incapacity brought out such generosity in the children and my husband cooked his first turkey for Thanksgiving that year. There was great unity among all of us and I was able to decide which of my jobs to quit.

So when we heard the news that my husband's job was coming to an end we began to wonder what God had in store. First of all the other girl who worked part-time at my job left, so I was given her hours too. This increased pay plus my husband's compensation benefits and a help from the food stamp program kept our heads above water financially. There was nothing left for extras but our friends helped us out with clothing and I couldn't even count how many times packages of food arrived. One of our chief worries was tuition and it looked like we'd have to put all the children in public school. I was deeply concerned about this because one of them was in eighth grade and we knew from the past that transferring a child in their last year was not always a pleasant experience. I was afraid of this happening again, yet I knew we could only do what we could and the rest leave in God's hands.

Our older son was going into his third year of high school. I really felt that it would be important to leave him in his school. We prayed together asking God to solve the school issue. Like a miracle our son got a job at a new grocery store that opened in our area. 800 people applied for the 120 available jobs and he was one of the fortunate ones. He earned just enough for his tuition and books and some clothing needs.

It was obvious though that the other children would have to change schools and we accepted it as the will of God. In the end the change proved to be advantageous for all three of the children who tranferred. The eighth-grader fit into her new situation like a glove and had a really happy year. The seventh-grader also adjusted beautifully; but the best surprise of all was my sixth-grader. He had failed sixth grade that year because his poor attitude kept him from doing his work and his teachers felt that holding ►

"My husband was out of work ... would there be another job in this period of bad economy for a man of forty with no high school education?"

him back was the only thing they could do. I was really afraid the trauma of being held back would hurt him, but since he was entering a new school, none of the other children even knew that he had been held back that year, and he decided he was going to make it this time. He had a teacher who really hit it off with him and he excelled so much that he made the honor role.

A few months afer the plant closed down, our youngest child was hospitalized after an asthma attack. She spent five days in the hospital. We had no medical insurance and I wondered how we'd ever pay the bill. The hospital gave us some forms to fill out for public aid to see if we could get a medical card. We weren't eligible however. I told the hospital we could pay five dollars per month until my husband got a job, but the woman I spoke to told me to wait because she wanted to check something out. It took a few months but by the end of it all, she called us one day to tell us our bill had been taken care of.

During these months Bill's compensation checks kept coming and when they ran out, he was granted a thirteen-week extension. He was also looking for work, but the job market was so tight that he felt privileged when some place would allow him to put in an application. During this time he was home a lot and our three-year-old and he became great pals. He was really into our house routine and made supper on the days I worked.

That summer my mother became ill and it was evident she would soon die. Under ordinary circumstances, I would visit her in the hospital as often as possible, but now Bill was at home and taking full charge so I could spend most of my time with my mother. My sister and I spent those days together with mom, singing to her, praying with her, and trying to love her in every way we could. Although it was a time of great suffering for mom, we shared it with her and in the end she had "a very beautiful death" as one of her nurses commented. It was our conviction too.

Then one morning, late in August, Bill had an interview for a job. That morning we said, "we always pray when we need something, this time let's also pray to thank God for this in-

terview, even if it doesn't result in a job." (It felt so good to even have such a prospect that we were grateful for the hopeful feelings we were experiencing.) At the end of our prayer we said "and thank you God for always sending our daily bread; please continue to send it." Bill went for the interview and discovered that thirty other men were also interviewed for the same position. As he was telling me about it, he held the mail in his hand. I reminded him not to worry, that God was watching over us and if this was not the job, then there would be another one for him. He opened a letter from compensation. It was bad news—his compensation had run out as of this last check. I was stunned because I had been under the impression that he would be given another extension. Waves of worry kept coming up. We would then lose the house; we would have to go on public aid (which I absolutely dreaded). Now it was his turn to remind me of God's love and we hugged each other and prayed. We asked for a good-paying job; we asked for faith, and for humility. After that prayer I felt strengthened and I knew God would take care of everything. And did he ever!

First of all Bill went back to the compensation office to be sure there were no other benefits, which there weren't. On his way home he stopped off at a brand new grocery store that opened a few blocks from our house. It was one of those discount stores and he just wanted to look it over. Because it was the grand opening, a lady handed him two ►

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loaves of bread as he entered. (It was a gift to all shoppers.) He handed it back and told her he wasn't buying anything but she said "It's O.K. take it anyway." He came home with the bread and we recalled our prayer that morning "Please keep sending our daily bread." It was this experience which kept pulsating through my veins during the next five weeks.

We spent a good deal of time deciding how to spend the last compensation check. We had found two forgotten twenty-five dollar savings bonds of mine and together with the check it was enough to make a house payment, pay one utility bill, get Bill a forty-dollar monthly bus pass so he could keep job hunting, get bus tokens for the children for school for one week and left us thirty dollars for food. We made out our shopping list with extreme care and decided to each take fifteen dollars to spend in that new store so we would each receive two loaves of bread. A friend of ours said she and her husband needed to shop there too and offered to give us their bread. We all went together and when the lady handed out the bread, she handed it to the children too and so we ended up with sixteen loaves of bread, enough for a few weeks. It was another experience of the love of God.

Those five weeks were most unusual to say the least. We went through various emotional ups and downs, often reminding each other that this too was God's love for us. We went through the paperwork tangle of applying for public aid. We had recently applied for food stamps based on Bill's compensation income. We notified them of our new status. They said it was too late to change the amount of stamps we would receive that month. So we received ninety-one dollars in food stamps for seven people for one month. This, too, we planned extremely carefully. Meanwhile providence was arriving in all kinds of ways. A communion of goods put into action amongst our friends who shared our belief in the Gospel and my extended family made God's providence tangible in our life. One of my common comments in those days was "I've never been so broke in my life, nor had I such a full pantry."

Then it came! A beautiful wonderful job for Bill with so many advantages that we knew it was from God. For ten years Bill had travelled forty miles each way to his old job always depending on other people for a ride. The new job is thirteen blocks from our house. The pay is a little more than his old job as well. He was offered much overtime at first and within two months we had caught up on all our past bills.

Now Bill has been working for six months, and although the bills still come in as usual, there is something different in how we view them. Life continues but we are grateful for the experience we lived together. We are now more certain that there is a loving Father who watches over us.

W.L.S.

1)Mt. 18:19.

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What is the Focolare Movement?

THE BEGINNINGS

FOCOLARE means "hearth," "family fireside." What first strikes people when they come in contact with members of the Focolare, whether in small groups or in large gatherings, is the atmosphere of a family. It is a family formed by many different people in various walks of life. The Focolare Movement is also known as the "Work of Mary." Under this name it was approved by Pope John XXIII in 1962.

The Focolare Movement began in 1943 in Italy. In the midst of the terrible destruction of World War II, Chiara Lubich realized that God is the only one worth living for. As a result, she began to center her life on the Gospel, together with a small group of young women who followed her. Their ideal became one of striving toward the fulfillment of Jesus' last prayer to the Father: "May they all be one" (Jn.17:21).

The life of Chiara and her first companions, and the spiritual way they spontaneously followed, gave rise to the unique form of spirituality of the Focolare Movement, a spirituality of unity. It has proved to be a powerful means of introducing the Gospel into modern life, of going to God together.

WHO ARE THE FOCOLARINI

Single men and women live in separate communities called Focolare Centers. Their principal aim is to achieve unity among themselves through mutual charity practiced twenty-four hours a day. They follow the evangelical counsels of poverty, chastity and obedience. They work as other laymen and women in regular jobs and professions.

Some married persons, even though continuing to live in their families, participate fully in the life of either the men's or women's Focolare Centers in their common effort to achieve this same unity. They are called "Married Focolarini" and form the backbone of a vast Movement within the Movement, called the New Family Movement.

THE VOLUNTEERS AND THE NEW HUMANITY MOVEMENT

The Volunteers, also called the "Volunteers of God," are a large group within the Focolare Movement; they would like to transform all human realities according to the Gospel spirit. The Volunteers are the backbone of the mass movement called New Humanity. The aim of this Movement is to help form a society made of men and women who are made "new" by the Gospel message and who can then bring new life to all fields of human activity (education, business, etc.). This results in new social relationships which, in turn, lead to the realization of new structures of society.

GEN

The new generations of the Focolare Movement form another Movement or, better, three movements: the Gen 2, the Gen 3 and the Gen 4 Movements, divided according to their various age groups. "Gen" stands for new generation. The Gen have committed themselves to living the Gospel message of love and to sharing with other youth the conviction they have that the Gospel is the answer to every question and the motive for everything they do.

THE MOVEMENT AMONG THE RELIGIOUS

Men and women religious — although they live according to their own rules and constitutions and are already a distinct part of the Church through their religious families — can also be associated with the Focolare.

Contact with the Movement helps them to focus their attention on the specific charism of their founders, and to see how it can be lived in the present time.

PRIESTS — PRIESTS' MOVEMENT —SEMINARIANS — PARISH MOVEMENT

Many diocesan priests are committed to living the spirituality of the Focolare Movement. Some of them live in community. They form the backbone of the Priests' Movement which is made up of priests who live the spirituality of unity.

FOCOLARE FAMILY

The largest group within the Focolare Movement is made up of men, women and young people who are connected with the Movement without having any formal ties with it. Their bond of unity stems from their acceptance of its spirit and their desire to live it.

ECUMENISM

The Movement not only crossed the political boundaries of more than 100 countries, it has also gone beyond the barriers erected for centuries between the various Christian Churches.

Ecumenical activities take place in the different parts of the world where the Movement exists.

In the past few years a promising, ongoing dialogue has been established with faithful of other religions.

SUMMER MARIAPOLIS

Summer meetings are held every year for those interested in the Movement and for those who wish to come into contact with it. For one week persons of all ages and walks of life are exposed to the spirituality of unity. Above all, they strive to practice it by creating among themselves a rapport that molds them into a community. It is intended to be a basic experience of such intense unity that the people will be able to bring it back into their own environments. And this is the most striking fruit of these conventions. They tend to be models of a world which lives according the Gospel.

PERMANENT MARIAPOLIS

The need to prolong the experience of the summer meetings brought about the birth of small cities called Permanent Mariapolis. They are made up of young men and women, as well as whole families, who are there for a designated period of time to be formed according to the Gospel spirit of unity.

They also attend classes in Sacred Scripture, Theology and Sociology and work for their own support.

MARIAPOLIS CENTERS

In addition to the Permanent Mariapolis, there are Mariapolis Centers, which are training centers for the members of the Movement.

FOCOLARE ADDRESSES IN NORTH AMERICA

CHICAGO:
P.O. Box 53426
Chicago, IL 60653

SAN ANTONIO:
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